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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5193

SEPT 03

1. LIBERATION RADIO IN VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE BROADCAST AUGUST 31 APPEALED TO URBAN CHINESE BO BOYCOTT CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. APPEAL CITED TA VINH EXECUTION, DRAFT OF CHINESE YOUTHS AND ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES OF URBAN LOWER CLASSES AS EVIDENCE EXPLOITATION CHINESE RESIDENTS BY "US-PUPPET-CHIANG KAI-SHEK CLIQUE" AND QUOTED CHINESE AS SAYING CANDIDATES ARE YES-MEN AND PUPPETS FOR OPPRESSIVE REGIME.

2. COMMENT: AS LIBERATION RADIO HAS NEVER BROADCAST IN CANTONESE AND MAJORITY URBAN CHINESE DO NOT

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SPEAK VIETANMESE, THIS TYPE PROPAGANDA HAS NEGLIGIBLE EFFECT. NO OTHER FORMS VC PROPAGANDA DIRECTED TOWARDS CHINESE PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS REPORTED YET. LODGE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5212

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS - KONTUM PROVINCE

1. ELECTION ACTIVITY IN HIGHLAND PROVINCE OF KONTUM CHARACTERIZED BY WIDESPREAD DISSEMINATION OF ELECTION MATERIALS, PROVINCE-ORGANIZED SPEAKING SCHEDULE FOR ALL VIETNAMESE CANDIDATES, SHADY CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY BY SOME CANDIDATES, AND LACK OF CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF MEANING OF ELECTIONS BY PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS. PROVINCE IS HEAVILY CATHOLIC (OVER 50 PERCENT) AND FLOCK HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO VOTE, WHILE BUDDHIST INSTITUTE FOLLOWING SMALL AND UNLIKELY STIMULATE

SIGNIFICANT BOYCOTT. CONSIDERABLE VC ANTI-ELECTION PROPAGANDA REPORTED BUT NO INCIDENTS YET OF ACTUAL DISRUPTION OF ELECTION PROCEDURES. GOOD VOTER TURN-OUT EXPECTED UNLESS VC CARRY THROUGH THREATS TO HAMPER LINES OF COMMUNICATION (GVN OFFICIALS CLAIM ADEQUATE PRECAUTIONS ALREADY TAKEN). ALTHOUGH PROVINCE CHIEF HAS INSTRUCTED PROVINCE OFFICIALS NOT ASSOCIATE WITH CANDIDATES DURING CAMPAIGN (PRACTICE WHICH OBSERVERS SAY PROVINCE CHIEF FOLLOWING RELIGIOUSLY), PROVINCE CHIEF CLEARLY FAVORS THE MILITARY CANDIDATE IN EACH RACE (VIETNAMESE AND MONTAGNARD).

2. RACE FOR VIETNAMESE SEAT. THIS APPEARS TO BE

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THREE-WAY CONTEST AND DIFFICULT PREDICT OUTCOME. MOST WELL KNOWN (BUT NOT UNIVERSALLY LIKED) IS NGUYEN HUU PHU, 59, BORN KONTUM, PRESENT CHAIRMAN PROVINCE COUNCIL, CATHOLIC, VIET MINH UNTIL 1954, MEMBER CAN LAO PARTY, KNOWN AS DIEMIST, AND FORMER PROVINCE INFORMATION CHIEF. PHU SPEAKS AT LEAST ONE MONTAGNARD DIALECT AND REPORTEDLY LIKED BY

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MONTAGNARDS. HOWEVER, HE DISTRUSTED BY MANY VIETNAMESE FOR PAST VIET MINH AND DIEM ASSOCIATIONS. NGUYEN VAN THONG, 34, IS TEACHER, CATHOLIC, MEMBER PROVINCE COUNCIL, AND WAS BORN HANOI. HE WAS REMOVED AS TEACHER IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECAUSE HE LACKED CREDENTIALS HE CLAIMED AND HAS OTHER BLEMISHES ON RECORD, INCLUDING CHARGE OF DISTRIBUTING COMMODITIES ACTUALLY PROVIDED BY USAID. THONG POORLY REGARDED BY EVERYONE WITH WHOM EMBOFF SPOKE. THIRD MAJOR CONTENDER IS CAPTAIN LE HUU LAM, ARVN DOCTOR WHO HAS PRIVATE PRACTICE IN KONTUM AS WELL. LAM ALSO FROM HANOI, 33, HAS RESIDED IN KONTUM FOR NEARLY SEVEN YEARS AND IS REPORTEDLY POPULAR FOR TREATING POOR PATIENTS AT LITTLE OR NO COST.

3. DESPITE DENIALS OF ANY POLITICAL ACTIVITY, LOCAL CATHOLIC DIOCESE ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS (SEEN BY AMERICANS) CALLING FOR EVERYONE TO VOTE AND TO VOTE FOR THONG. THIS PROBABLY INSPIRED BY NORTHERN PRIESTS IN KONTUM. THONG ALSO VERY ACTIVE AMONG MONTAGNARDS, EVEN BEFORE CAMPAIGN OFFICIALLY BEGAN.

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SINCE PHU ALSO EXPECTED TO MAKE GOOD SHOWING AMONG MONTAGNARDS, RESULT MAY BE SPLIT IN CATHOLIC VOTE AND ELECTION OF LAM, NON-PRACTICING CATHOLIC WHO UNDOUBTEDLY RECEIVING SUPPORT OF MILITARY AND GVN OFFICIALS. LAM REPUTEDLY BEST CANDIDATE BY FAR.

4. THONG AND PHU HAVE ENGAGED IN CAMPAIGN OF ACCUSATIONS AND COUNTER-ACCUSATIONS. SEVERAL NIGHTS AGO GRENADE WENT OFF OUTSIDE THONG'S HOUSE. HE IMMEDIATELY ACCUSED PHU, BUT INVESTIGATORS ALMOST CONVINCED THAT THONG STAGED INCIDENT HIMSELF.

5. OTHER TWO VIETNAMESE CANDIDATES, BOTH MEMBERS PROVINCE COUNCIL, ONE CATHOLIC AND ONE BUDDHIST, UNLIKELY TO RECEIVE MUCH SUPPORT.

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6. MONTAGNARD ELECTION. FIVE CANDIDATES HAVE PRESENTED THEMSELVES, INCLUDING ONE FULRO MEMBER WHO APPLIED FOR CANDIDACY IN LAST FE DAYS, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EXTENDED FILING PERIOD. KELY WINNER IS LIEUTENANT PEANG (VIETNAMESE NAME: NGUYEN VAN PHIEN), WHO IS WELL KNOWN TO MONTAGNARD LEADERS (WHO WILL BE ELECTORS) THROUGH WORK AS CHIEF OF

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PROVINCIAL MONTAGNARD SERVICE. FULRO CANDIDATE JEAN JEM IS YOUNG SERGEANT WHO HAS BEEN ABSENT FROM PROVINCE FOR SOME TIME WITH FULRO IN BAN ME THUOT.

7. OF OTHER MONTAGNARD CANDIDATES, MOST POPULAR APPEARS TO BE SIU-KIOH WHO IS MALE NURSE AND NOW ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER AT KONTUM HOSPITAL, WHERE HE HAS WORKED SINCE 1936. HOWEVER, HE IS JARAI, AND PROVINCE DOMINATED BY BAHNAR AND SEDANG TRIBES. OTHER TWO ARE HIU, A TEACHER, AND NICOLAS KIOP, RETIRED ARVN LIEUTENANT, NEITHER OF WHOM LIKELY TO RECEIVE MANY VOTES.

8. NATURE OF CAMPAIGNS. ACCORDING GVN OFFICIALS AND SOME CANDIDATES THEMSELVES, CANDIDATES THUS FAR HAVE LIMITED THEIR TALKS TO DESCRIPTION OF PERSONAL HISTORY AND VERY GENERAL REFERENCES TO WHAT THEY DESIRE FOR COUNTRY (INDEPENDENCE, DEMOCRACY, FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNISM, ETC.). HOWEVER, AT LEAST TWO PLAN TO DISCUSS NATURE OF CONSTITUTION THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE DRAFTED (BOTH PREFER PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS)

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LATER IN CAMPAIGN WHEN THEY SPEAK BEFORE MORE SOPHISTICATED AUDIENCE, PARTICULARLY GVN OFFICIALS AND MILITARY. CANDIDATE SIU-KIOH STATED THAT HE HAS NO EXPERIENCE IN GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND THUS WOULD RELY ON ADVICE OF PAUL NUR, GVN MONTAGNARD COMMISSIONER, WHO IS MARRIED TO SIU-KIOH'S NIECE.

9. VOTER TURNOUT. THERE ARE 38,264 REGISTERED VOTERS IN PROVINCE OF WHOM 13,570 ARE VIETNAMESE AND 24,694 ARE MONTAGNARDS. APPROXIMATELY ONE THOUSAND ELECTORS (OF WHOM 181 RECENTLY SELECTED BY MONTAGNARDS) WILL ELECT MONTAGNARD CANDIDATE. LODGE
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